

REMARKS

This response is intended as a full and complete response to the Office Action dated February 23, 2007. In view of the following amendment and discussion, the Applicants believe that all claims are in allowable form.

CLAIM REJECTIONS

35 U.S.C. §103 Claim 1

Claim 1 stands rejected as being unpatentable over United States Patent No. 5,508,519 issued April 16, 1996 to *Bennett, et al.*, (hereinafter *Bennett*), in view of United States Patent No. 3,951,478 issued April 20, 1976 to *Olsen, et al.*, (hereinafter *Olsen*) and United States Patent No. 5,873,177 issued February 23, 1999 to *Honda, et al.*, (hereinafter *Honda*). In response, the Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate all the elements of claims 3 and 6. Claims 3 and 6 have been cancelled without prejudice. The Examiner has indicated in the Interview of March 28, 2007 that claim 1, as amended, appears be patentable over the references of record.

Specifically, both *Olsen* and *Bennett* teach that a lip of the seal extends towards the high pressure side of the apparatus, thus teaching away from the claimed features of the annular guard ring recited by claim 1. Thus, the combination of *Bennett*, *Olsen* and *Honda* do not teach or suggest a substantially annular guard ring positioned within a step of an aperture formed in a bottom of a chamber body, the guard ring having a portion that slopes radially inward and upwards into sealing contact with a shaft extending through the aperture, wherein the guard ring further comprises a base portion having an outer circumference and an inner perimeter, wherein the outer circumference contacts the step and the inner perimeter is adapted for substantially sealing a gap between the shaft and the aperture, and wherein the inner perimeter is formed substantially as a wedge.

Therefore, the Applicants submit that claim 1 is patentable over *Bennett* in view of *Olsen* and *Honda*. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request the rejection be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. §103(a) Claims 2-7

Claims 2-7 stand rejected as being unpatentable over *Bennett* in view of *Olsen* and *Honda*, and in further view of United States Patent No. 5,273,588 issued December 28, 1993 to *Forster, et al.* (hereinafter *Forster*). In response, the Applicants have amended claim 1 into allowable form as discussed above. Claims 3 and 6 have been cancelled without prejudice.

Additionally, *Forster* does not teach a lip of a seal that extends towards the low pressure side of the apparatus. Thus, the combination of *Bennett*, *Olsen*, *Honda* and *Forster* do not teach or suggest a substantially annular guard ring positioned within a step of an aperture formed in a bottom of a chamber body, the guard ring having a portion that slopes radially inward and upwards into sealing contact with a shaft extending through the aperture, wherein the guard ring further comprises a base portion having an outer circumference and an inner perimeter, wherein the outer circumference contacts the step and the inner perimeter is adapted for substantially sealing a gap between the shaft and the aperture, and wherein the inner perimeter is formed substantially as a wedge.

Therefore, the Applicants submit that claims 2, 4-5 and 7, which depend from claim 1, is patentable over *Bennett* in view of *Olsen* and *Honda*, and in further view of *Forster*. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request the rejection be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C §103(a) Claim 21

Claim 21 stands rejected as being unpatentable over *Bennett* in view of *Honda*. In response, the Applicants have cancelled claim 21 without prejudice. The Applications reserve the right to file continuing applications to continue prosecution of the cancelled subject matter.

REJOINDER OF WITHDRAWN CLAIMS

Withdrawn claims 8-20 depend from claim 1. Claim 8 has been amended to more clearly recite aspects of the invention. Claim 10 has been cancelled without prejudice. As the Applicants believe claim 1 is in allowable form, rejoinder and allowance of claims 8-9 and 11-20 are requested.

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CONCLUSION

Thus, for at least the reasons discussed above, the Applicants submit that all claims now pending are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, both reconsideration of this application and its swift passage to issuance are earnestly solicited.

If, however, the Examiner believes that any unresolved issues still exist, it is requested that the Examiner telephone Mr. Keith Taboada at (732) 530-9404 so that appropriate arrangements can be made for resolving such issues as expeditiously as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

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